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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XE231

Endangered and Threatened Species; Recovery Plans

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of availability; request for comments.

SUMMARY: We, NMFS, announce that the *Proposed Endangered Species Act (ESA) Recovery Plan for Oregon Coast Coho Salmon* (Proposed Plan) is available for public review and comment. The Proposed Plan addresses the Oregon Coast Coho Salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) evolutionarily significant unit (ESU) listed as threatened under the ESA. The geographic area covered by the Proposed Plan is the Pacific Ocean and freshwater habitat (rivers, streams and lakes) from the Necanicum River near Seaside, Oregon, on the northern end to the Sixes River near Port Orford, Oregon on the south. As required under the ESA, the Proposed Plan contains objective, measurable delisting criteria, site-specific management actions necessary to achieve the Proposed Plan's goals, and estimates of the time and costs required to implement recovery actions. We are soliciting review and comment from the public and all interested parties on the Proposed Plan.

DATES: We will consider and address, as appropriate, all substantive comments received during the comment period. Comments on the Proposed Plan must be received no later than 5 p.m. Pacific daylight time on [*insert date 60 days after date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*].

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on the Public Draft Recovery Plan by the following methods:

- *Electronic Submissions:* Submit all electronic public comments via:
2015CohoPlan.WCR@noaa.gov. Please include “Comments on Oregon Coast Coho Salmon Recovery Plan” in the subject line of the email.
- *Facsimile:* (503) 872-2737.
- *Mail:* Robert Walton, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1201 N.E. Lloyd Boulevard, Suite 1100, Portland, OR 97232.

Instructions: Comments must be submitted by one of the above methods to ensure comments are received, documented, and considered by NMFS. Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in Microsoft Word, Excel, or Adobe PDF file formats only.

Electronic copies of the Proposed Plan are available on the NMFS Web site at:

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/recovery_planning_and_implementation/oregon_coast/oregon_coast_recovery_plan.html.

Persons wishing to obtain an electronic copy on CD ROM of the Proposed Plan may do so by

calling Nancy Johnson at (503) 230-5442 or by emailing a request to nancy.johnson@noaa.gov with the subject line "CD ROM Request for Oregon Coast Coho Salmon Recovery Plan."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Robert Walton, NMFS Oregon Coast Coho Salmon Recovery Coordinator, at (503) 231-2285, or rob.walton@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

We are responsible for developing and implementing recovery plans for Pacific salmon and steelhead listed under the ESA of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). Recovery means that the listed species and their ecosystems are sufficiently restored, and their future secured, to the point that the protections of the ESA are no longer necessary. Section 4(f)(1) of the ESA requires that recovery plans include, to the maximum extent practicable: (1) objective, measurable criteria which, when met, would result in a determination that the species is no longer threatened or endangered; (2) site-specific management actions necessary to achieve the plan's goals; and (3) estimates of the time required and costs to implement recovery actions. The ESA requires the development of recovery plans for each listed species unless such a plan would not promote its recovery.

We believe it is essential to have local support of recovery plans by those whose activities directly affect the listed species and whose continued commitment and leadership will be needed to implement the necessary recovery actions. We therefore support and participate in locally led, collaborative efforts to develop recovery plans that involve state, tribal, and Federal entities, local communities, and other stakeholders. We have determined that this *Proposed ESA*

Recovery Plan for Oregon Coast Coho Salmon meets the statutory requirements for a recovery plan and are proposing to adopt it as the ESA recovery plan for this threatened species. Section 4(f) of the ESA, as amended in 1988, requires that public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment be provided prior to final approval of a recovery plan. This notice solicits comments on this Proposed Plan.

Development of the Proposed Plan

For the purpose of recovery planning for the ESA-listed species of Pacific salmon and steelhead in Idaho, Oregon and Washington, NMFS designated five geographically based “recovery domains.” The Oregon Coast Coho Salmon ESU spawning range is in the Oregon Coast domain. For each domain, NMFS appointed a team of scientists, nominated for their geographic and species expertise, to provide a solid scientific foundation for recovery plans. The Oregon and Northern California Coasts Technical Recovery Team (TRT) included scientists from NMFS, other Federal agencies, the state of Oregon, and the private sector.

A primary task for the Oregon and Northern California Coasts Technical Recovery Team was to recommend criteria for determining when the ESU should be considered viable (i.e., when they have a low risk of extinction over a 100-year period) and when the ESU would have a risk of extinction consistent with no longer needing the protections of the ESA. All Technical Recovery Teams used the same biological principles for developing their recommendations; these principles are described in the NOAA technical memorandum *Viable Salmonid Populations and the Recovery of Evolutionarily Significant Units* (McElhany *et al.*, 2000). Viable salmonid populations (VSP) are defined in terms of four parameters: abundance, productivity or growth rate, spatial structure, and diversity.

For this Proposed Plan, we collaborated with state, tribal and Federal scientists and resource managers and stakeholders to provide technical information that NMFS used to write the Proposed Plan which is built upon locally-led recovery efforts.

The Proposed Plan, including the recovery plan modules, is now available for public review and comment.

Contents of Proposed Plan

The Proposed Plan contains biological background and contextual information that includes description of the ESU, the planning area, and the context of the plan's development. It presents relevant information on ESU structure, biological status and proposed biological viability criteria and threats criteria for delisting.

The Proposed Plan also describes specific information on the following: current status of Oregon Coast Coho Salmon; limiting factors and threats for the full life cycle that contributed to the species decline; recovery strategies and actions addressing these limiting factors and threats; key information needs, and a proposed research, monitoring, and evaluation program for adaptive management. For recovery strategies and actions, Chapter 6 in the Proposed Plan includes proposed actions at the ESU and strata levels. Population level information will be posted on the recovery plan website (see below). The plan also describes how implementation, prioritization of actions, and adaptive management will proceed at the population, strata, and ESU scales. The Proposed Plan also summarizes time and costs (Chapter 7) required to implement recovery actions. In addition to the information in the Proposed Plan, readers are referred to the recovery plan website for more information on all these topics.

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/protected_species/salmon_steelhead/recovery_planning_and_implementation/oregon_coast/oregon_coast_salmon_recovery_domain.html)

How NMFS and Others Expect to Use the Plan

With approval of the final Plan, we will commit to implement the actions in the Plan for which we have authority and funding; encourage other Federal and state agencies and tribal governments to implement recovery actions for which they have responsibility, authority and funding; and work cooperatively with the public and local stakeholders on implementation of other actions. We expect the Plan to guide us and other Federal agencies in evaluating Federal actions under ESA section 7, as well as in implementing other provisions of the ESA and other statutes. For example, the Plan will provide greater biological context for evaluating the effects that a proposed action may have on a species by providing delisting criteria, information on priority areas for addressing specific limiting factors, and information on how future populations within the ESU can tolerate varying levels of risk.

When we are considering a species for delisting, the agency will examine whether the section 4(a)(1) listing factors have been addressed. To assist in this examination, we will use the delisting criteria described in Chapter 4 of the Plan, which includes both biological criteria and criteria addressing each of the ESA section 4(a)(1) listing factors, as well as any other relevant data and policy considerations.

We will also work with the Oregon Coast Coho Conservation Plan Implementation Team described in the Proposed Plan to develop implementation schedules that provide greater specificity for recovery actions to be implemented over three-to five-year periods. This Team

will also help promote implementation of recovery actions and subsequent implementation schedules, and will track and report on implementation progress.

Conclusion

Section 4(f)(1)(B) of the ESA requires that recovery plans incorporate, to the maximum extent practicable, (1) objective, measurable criteria which, when met, would result in a determination that the species is no longer threatened or endangered; (2) site-specific management actions necessary to achieve the plan's goals; and (3) estimates of the time required and costs to implement recovery actions. We conclude that the Proposed Plan meets the requirements of ESA section 4(f) and are proposing to adopt it as the *ESA Recovery Plan for Oregon Coast Coho Salmon*.

Public Comments Solicited

We are soliciting written comments on the Proposed Plan. All substantive comments received by the date specified above will be considered and incorporated, as appropriate, prior to our decision whether to approve the plan. We will issue a news release announcing the adoption and availability of the final plan. We will post on the NMFS West Coast Region Web site (www.wcr.noaa.gov) a summary of, and responses to, the comments received, along with electronic copies of the final plan and its appendices.

Literature Cited

McElhany, P., M.H. Ruckelshaus, M.J. Ford, T.C. Wainwright, and E.P. Bjorkstedt. 2000.

Viable salmon populations and the recovery of evolutionarily significant units. U.S.

Dept. of Commerce, NOAA Tech. Memo., NMFS NWFSC 42, 156 p.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*

Dated: October 6, 2015.

Angela Somma,

Chief, Endangered Species Conservation Division,

Office of Protected Resources,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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